

Police Structure in India: Colonial Shadows, Modern Responsibilities

Komal Aggarwal,¹ Dr. Syedah Fatima Zahara Jafri²

¹ Research Scholar (Ph.D), School of Law, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India
komalaggawal912@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, School of Law, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India
fatimashah.678@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper critically examines the Indian police system by tracing its colonial foundations, structural limitations and contemporary challenges. Despite being one of the largest police forces globally in terms of personnel, India's police remain under-resourced relative to population size, resulting in inefficiency, pendency of cases and declining public trust. Political interference, inadequate modernization, weak training regimes and poor police–public relations further undermine effectiveness. The study positions Indian policing within a broader comparative framework highlighting how different models of law enforcement emphasize accountability, functional separation and community participation. In contrast, India's system continues to rely heavily on executive discretion and outdated colonial frameworks, limiting democratization and weakening legitimacy. The paper concludes by proposing reforms aimed at amending outdated Police Acts, strengthening independent oversight bodies, investing in modernization and training, expanding community policing and enhancing coordination across levels of governance.

Key Words: Police Reform, Accountability, Transparency, Community Policing, Police–Public Relations, Criminal Justice System.

1. INTRODUCTION

Policing is one of the most visible functions of the state shaping the everyday experience of law, order and justice. The police officer is often the first representative of government encountered by citizens in moments of vulnerability, conflict or crisis. In such meetings, the legitimacy of the state is judged not only by the efficiency of law enforcement but also by the fairness, empathy and accountability of its agents. A police system that commands trust strengthens democracy and one that inspires fear or suspicion undermines it.

India's police structure, however, continues to carry the imprint of its colonial origins. The Indian Police Act of 1861 intended to control rather than serve remains the groundwork of policing even today.¹ Despite constitutional guarantees, the system has largely retained its executive-centric character with limited democratization and weak community participation. This has contributed to persistent challenges such as political interference, inadequate modernization, poor training, understaffing, strained police–public relations and declining public confidence.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and comparative research design relying primarily on documentary analysis of statutory instruments such as the Indian Police Act, 1861, the Model Police Acts, constitutional provisions and reports of various police commissions to trace the historical evolution of policing in India. Judicial pronouncements were examined to understand the role of courts in shaping reform. A comparative lens was applied to policing models across different jurisdictions focusing on variables such as organizational structure, recruitment and selection processes, accountability mechanisms and police–public relations in order to distill lessons relevant to the Indian context. Secondary data from

¹ David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras, 1859–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 42.

academic literature, government reports and policy documents were synthesized to identify recurring themes including political interference, modernization deficits, training gaps and strained police–public relations.

3. Origins and Evolution

The concept of policing derives from the Greek *politeia* and Latin *politia*, both linked to governance and civil order.² Over centuries, policing evolved from informal watchmen and community responsibility into salaried state-funded institutions. Ancient China relied on prefects, Greece on public slaves, Rome on vigiles, and medieval Spain on armed brotherhoods. France formalized policing under Louis XIV in 1667, later creating the gendarmerie. Britain's gradual development culminated in the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829, which became the model for modern policing and influenced systems worldwide, including India.³

In the United States, police adopted the British model but expanded into paramilitary structures after the Civil War, later evolving toward community policing. Globalization has since introduced transnational policing with institutions like Interpol and UN peacekeeping missions addressing cross-border threats.⁴ India's indigenous policing traditions resembled Saxon England with *zamindars* and village watchmen responsible for law and order. Urban centers relied on *kotwals* who managed large establishments but often supplemented salaries through unauthorized exactions.⁵ Colonial rule reshaped these systems into rigid, hierarchical structures that persist today.

4. Historical Background of the Police System in India

Ancient Period (320–1200 A.D.)

Policing in India predates colonial rule. The Harappan Civilization employed guards and maintained military barracks for internal defense. A Harappan seal depicting a man with a staff (*Dandadhar*) is considered the earliest representation of a policeman. Ancient texts emphasized the king's duty to preserve peace and punish wrongdoing. The concept of *danda* (staff or rod) symbolized the coercive power of the state, viewed as a righteous obligation to uphold justice.⁶ The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* describe squads maintaining order and crowd control while Manu's system divided police into criminal investigation and law-and-order wings. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (Mauryan period) provided the first systematic framework of policing, outlining rural (*Pradesta*), urban (*Nagarka*), and supervisory (*Sthamikas*) branches.⁷ The Samaharta, akin to a Home Minister, oversaw law and order nationwide, supported by secret agents and local officers. Kautilya's *Dandaniti* (science of punishment) is regarded as the foundation of organized policing in India.

Medieval Period (1200–1757 A.D.)

Under Muslim rule, policing was shaped by Islamic law and adapted to Indian society.⁸

- **Muhtasibs** (public censors) enforced moral conduct and law, existing at both capital and provincial levels.
- **Espionage systems** under rulers like Balban monitored misconduct.
- **Shiqdars** under Sher Shah administered justice and police duties at the provincial level, while **Muqaddams** acted as village chiefs.
- **Kotwals** during Mughal rule combined policing with municipal and judicial functions, attending royal courts regularly.

Punishments reflected Islamic categories:⁹

² Clifford Shearing and Philip Stenning, "Modern Policing and the Policing of Modernity," in *Policing, Security and Democracy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Ian Loader (London: Routledge, 1994), 23.

³ Arvind Verma, *The Indian Police: A Critical Evaluation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 44.

⁴ N. Prabhakar, "Globalization and Policing in India," *Indian Journal of Public Administration* 52, no. 3 (2006): 389.

⁵ K.S. Shukla, "The Kotwal System in Medieval India," *Indian Historical Review* 5, no. 2 (1978): 201.

⁶ R.S. Sharma, *India's Ancient Past* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 87.

⁷ R. Shamasastri, *Kautilya's Arthashastra* (Bangalore: Government Press, 1915), 102

⁸ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 1999), 214.

⁹ *ibid*

- *Qisas* (retaliation)
- *Hadd* (fixed punishments for theft, robbery)
- *Tazir* (discretionary penalties)

Police functionaries were rarely dedicated solely to policing; they combined duties in revenue, administration, and justice.

British Period (1757–1947)

With the British victory at Plassey in 1757, the East India Company transitioned from traders to rulers inheriting Mughal policing framework. Early systems under *kotwals*, *thanedars* and *darogas* became increasingly corrupt and oppressive, focused more on revenue collection than public order.¹⁰ Reforms began under Lord Cornwallis (1786–93) who abolished the *thanedari* system and appointed *darogas* with defined duties and salaries. Yet inefficiency, extortion and negligence persisted. Commissions in the early 19th century recommended separating police from zamindars to reduce corruption while reports such as the Madras Torture Commission (1855) exposed systemic abuse.

The turning point came with the Indian Police Act of 1861 enacted after the 1857 uprising. Modelled on the Royal Irish Constabulary, it created a centralized and militarized force under strict magisterial control. Its purpose was not service but control that is to keep Indians in check while ensuring revenue collection and political stability.¹¹ Later reforms included the All-India Police Commission of 1902 which sought uniformity, better training and prevention of torture but implementation was minimal. Entry of Indians into higher ranks was delayed until 1920 and even by 1931 they held only 20% of superintendent posts. Despite recommendations, colonial policing remained largely unchanged until independence.

Post-Independence Period (1947–1987)

Independence in 1947 and the Constitution of 1950 transformed India into a secular democracy but the police system remained rooted in the Police Act of 1861. The 1977 National Police Commission found the force inefficient, corrupt and oppressive with poor training, weak public relations and inadequate grievance redressal.¹²

Central Police Administration: The Union Government oversees the Indian Police Service (IPS), training schools and intelligence departments, coordinating with states and awarding police medals for meritorious service.

State Police Administration: States retain control under the 1861 Act. The Home Minister and Home Secretary supervise the department, with the Director General of Police (DGP) at the top. States are divided into zones, districts, subdivisions, circles, and police stations. The Station House Officer (SHO) leads the *thana*, supported by sub-inspectors, constables and specialized branches such as armed, unarmed, railway, rural and volunteer police

Despite political revolution, the police structure remained colonial in design, slow to adapt to democratic accountability and modern challenges.

Roles and Functions

Policing revolves around two core duties: maintaining law and maintaining order.¹³ These generate a wide spectrum of responsibilities:

- **Law enforcement:** Upholding rights, investigating crimes, prosecuting offenders.
- **Order maintenance:** Managing demonstrations, strikes and communal tensions.
- **Security:** Protecting infrastructure, VIPs and essential services.

¹⁰ Arvind Verma, *The Indian Police: A Critical Evaluation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 44.

¹¹ Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (London: Longman, 1996), 67.

¹² David H. Bayley, *Police and Political Development in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 211.

¹³ Robert B. Peabody, "Policing and Democratic Governance," *Comparative Politics* 10, no. 2 (1978): 145.

- **Social responsibilities:** Assisting vulnerable groups, preventing harassment, ensuring humane treatment of detainees.
- **Emergency response:** Acting as first responders during disasters and crisis.
- **Administrative duties:** Record keeping, intelligence gathering, public relations, and inter-departmental assistance.
- **Conflict resolution:** Central to the police role, requiring impartiality and community trust.

5. Contemporary Challenges and Global Influences

The Indian police system today operates in a rapidly changing environment shaped by globalization, technology and new forms of crime. Traditional duties of law enforcement and order maintenance are now accompanied by responsibilities in counter-terrorism, cybercrime, organized crime and transnational threats.¹⁴

Global institutions such as Interpol and UN peacekeeping missions highlight the growing importance of cross-border cooperation. The concept of transnational policing emphasizes intelligence sharing, joint operations, and capacity-building in fragile states — practices increasingly relevant for India as it confronts terrorism, trafficking, and cyber threats. Domestically, the police face challenges of overcrowded prisons, understaffed forces, political interference and public mistrust. Community policing initiatives have attempted to bridge the gap between citizens and the force, but colonial legacies of hierarchy and coercion remain obstacles. Reform efforts stress modernization, accountability, and human rights, aiming to transform the police into a service-oriented institution suited to the needs of the world's largest democracy.¹⁵

6. Problems and Contemporary Challenges of the Indian Police System

- Political Interference** - The most persistent problem facing Indian policing is political interference. From recruitment to transfers, promotions and investigations, politicians exert undue influence, often compelling officers to act in partisan ways. Commissions across states such as Kerala (1959), West Bengal (1960–61), Delhi (1968), Tamil Nadu (1971), and the Committee on Police Training (1972) documented how interference erodes professionalism, fosters corruption and demoralizes the force.¹⁶ Transfers and suspensions are frequently misused as coercive tools undermining morale and discipline. Officers who resist unlawful orders are humiliated or abruptly shifted while compliant juniors boast of political backing. State governments have even issued illegal executive instructions restricting lawful police action as seen in the Jay Engineering Works case (1967) in West Bengal, where police were ordered not to intervene in *gheraos* without ministerial clearance.¹⁷ The repercussions are severe: officers prioritize cultivating political patrons over professional duties thus weakening the chain of command and bypassing supervisory ranks. The 1979 policemen's stir, triggered by victimization of a constable at a politician's behest highlighted the dangers of such interference. A conference of Chief Ministers that year acknowledged widespread unlawful interference and urged consensus to insulate police from politics.¹⁸
- Lack of Modernisation** - Despite periodic increases in funding, modernization remains inadequate. Between 2012 and 2017, less than half (48%) of modernization budgets were utilized. Many police stations still lack basic infrastructure: 267 without telephones, 129 without wireless devices and 273 without vehicles. On average, there are only eight vehicles per 100 personnel thus crippling mobility.¹⁹
 - Transport and Weapons** - While specialized vehicles increased sharply, light vehicles grew only modestly, leaving 273 stations without transport, concentrated in insurgency-hit states like Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Manipur. Weapons shortages are equally dire: Uttar Pradesh uses arms

¹⁴ Mathieu Deflem, *Policing World Society: Historical Foundations of International Police Cooperation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 88.

¹⁵ Arvind Verma, "Community Policing in India: Lessons from the Past," *Asian Criminology* 1, no. 1 (2006): 27.

¹⁶ N. Prabhakar, "Political Interference in Policing: An Indian Perspective," *Indian Journal of Public Administration* 28, no. 3 (1982): 215.

¹⁷ K.S. Subramanian, *Political Violence and the Police in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007), 64.

¹⁸ Prakash Singh, *The Struggle for Police Reforms in India* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2019), 56.

¹⁹ Ministry of Home Affairs, *Modernisation of State Police Forces (MPF) Scheme Report* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2017).

declared obsolete decades ago; Rajasthan faced an 85% shortfall; West Bengal, Karnataka, and Gujarat reported deficits of 71%, 37%, and 36% respectively.²⁰

- b. **Erratic Utilization** - Utilization of modernization funds fluctuated wildly e.g. 87% in 2014 dropping to 14% in 2016 before rising again to 75% in 2017. States like Nagaland fully utilized allocations but others including Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, left most funds unspent. Communications infrastructure remains outdated, with wireless sets past their lifespan and satellite networks incomplete.²¹
 - c. **Training Deficits** - Training is central to police capacity, yet remains outdated and underfunded, averaging only 1% of police expenditure. Recruits undergo 12–24 months of training at significant cost, but emphasis is misplaced: Soft skills are neglected, fostering aggressive behavior that alienates citizens. Investigative techniques receive little attention, contributing to declining conviction rates. Forensic facilities are inadequate, even at the National Police Academy. Discipline and fitness are poorly enforced, eroding respect for the uniform. The reliance on third-degree methods and extra-judicial measures reflects the failure to modernize training regimes.
- iii. **Overburdened Police** - India's police are severely understaffed with a ratio of 192 per lakh population below the UN standard of 222. With only 144 officers per 100,000 citizens, India ranks among the weakest globally. States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have fewer than 100 per 100,000. Understaffing leads to overburdening: officers juggle crime prevention, law and order and miscellaneous duties such as traffic management and disaster response.²² Pendency is high and conviction rates are low due to poor investigations, while crime per lakh population is rising. Public trust is equally low. A 2018 survey found less than 25% of Indians trust the police highly, compared to 54% for the army. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission noted that police are widely viewed as corrupt, inefficient, partisan, and unresponsive.²³
- iv. **Judicial Efforts and Their Limits** - The National Police Commission (1977–81) issued eight reports recommending reforms including insulating police from politics and separating investigation from law-and-order duties. These proposals resurfaced in the Prakash Singh case (1996–2006)²⁴ where the Supreme Court issued seven directives, including establishing State Security Commissions, transparent appointments of police chiefs, and drafting a Model Police Act. Implementation, however, has been poor. Fifteen states enacted diluted laws, while others ignored directions. Institutions like Complaints Authorities were set up with curtailed powers. Arbitrary transfers continue, and the separation of functions remains incomplete.²⁵ The Union Government has yet to pass a Model Police Bill thereby leaving colonial structures intact.
- v. **Lack of Coordination between Centre and States** - Internal security threats such as terrorism, insurgency, organized crime and political violence demand joint responsibility yet coordination between Centre and States is weak. While Article 355 places ultimate responsibility on the Union, "Public Order" and "Police" remain state subjects under Article 246, creating jurisdictional tensions. Operational challenges include deployment of non-local forces unfamiliar with local customs, poor liaison between civil and paramilitary authorities, and politicisation of local police. India lacks a national agency dedicated to organized crime, leaving states isolated. Intelligence failures, weak crisis management, and outdated training further undermine preparedness. Social media has amplified risks, enabling misinformation to spread rapidly and escalate unrest. Training remains underfunded, averaging just 1% of police budgets, leaving personnel ill-equipped for modern challenges such as cybercrime and counterterrorism.

Police–Public Relationship in India

India's police system inherited from the British through the Police Act of 1861 was designed more to protect rulers than serve citizens. This colonial legacy created a force that was authoritarian, hierarchical and distant from the public leaving

²⁰ Bureau of Police Research and Development, *Data on Police Organisations in India 2016* (New Delhi: BPR&D, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016)

²¹ Comptroller and Auditor General of India, *Performance Audit Report on Modernisation and Strengthening of Police Forces, Government of Uttar Pradesh* (Report No. 3 of 2017).

²² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Homicide 2019: Trends, Contexts, Data* (Vienna: United Nations, 2019), 214

²³ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2018: Governance and Public Trust* (New York: United Nations, 2018), 132

²⁴ Supreme Court of India, *Prakash Singh and Others v. Union of India and Others*, (2006) 8 SCC 1.

²⁵ Prakash Singh, *The Struggle for Police Reforms in India* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2019), 102.

behind deep mistrust. Even after independence, reforms have been slow and the structure remains largely unchanged with citizens often perceiving police as corrupt, partisan and unresponsive. The result is a persistent gap between public expectations and police performance compounded by political interference, poor training and inadequate modernization.

In democratic societies, police legitimacy depends on public trust and cooperation. Effective police–public relations encourage crime reporting, intelligence sharing and proactive prevention, while poor relations foster distrust and reactive policing. Scholars stress that police cannot solve complex social problems alone, community involvement and participative approaches are essential. A people-friendly police built on fairness, transparency, and responsiveness, can rebuild legitimacy and strengthen democracy. Community policing offers the most promising path forward, transforming the force from agents of authority into collaborators in public welfare and harmony.

International Comparison of Recruitment and Selection of Police Personnel

Policing is a universal function of sovereign governments but systems differ widely depending on socio-cultural contexts, political traditions and historical legacies. Recruitment and selection processes reflect whether policing is centralized or decentralized, civilian or military, and whether it operates on principles of policing by consent or policing by law.

Saudi Arabia operates a centralized police system under the King, with senior posts held by the royal family. The Public Security Police (regular and investigative) handle general duties while the *Mutawwiun* enforce Sharia. Tribal elders retain authority in some regions and the National Guard often overlaps with police functions.²⁶

China follows a singular centralized model under the Ministry of Public Security. Provincial and municipal bureaus maintain strict vertical control, with recruitment through national exams and training emphasizing discipline and loyalty to the Communist Party.²⁷

France balances civilian and military traditions. The Police Nationale covers urban areas, while the Gendarmerie Nationale (military) handles rural policing. Customs and municipal police add layers of jurisdiction, with recruitment varying by agency.²⁸

United Kingdom relies on decentralized policing by consent, now largely policing by law. Forty-three regional forces operate under shared governance between the Home Office, Police Authorities, and Chief Officers. Independent bodies audit performance and misconduct.²⁹

Spain has a multiple centralized but uncoordinated system. The National Police serve cities, the Guardia Civil (military) covers rural and national security, and local police enforce municipal laws. Overlaps often create inefficiencies.³⁰

India - India has the largest police force in the world, with over 1 million personnel, yet relative to its population, the ratio is only 0.95 officers per 1,000 people, ranking 47th globally. The Indian police system is a multiple, uncoordinated, decentralized model. Each state has its own police force headed by a Director General of Police (DGP) but senior ranks are filled by officers of the Indian Police Service (IPS), creating indirect central control. The hierarchy is vertically aligned with IPS officers at the top, inspectors and sub-inspectors at station level and constables (88% of total strength) handling patrolling and law-and-order duties. The Indian Police Act of 1861, enacted after the 1857 uprising, remains the foundation of policing. Despite independence, most states retained this colonial statute, with only minor local variations. The Model Police Act of 2008 attempted reforms but retained the same philosophy. India's policing remains executive-centric, with limited democratization. Lessons from comparative models underscore the need for inclusive, accountable and community-oriented policing. Strengthening village-level cooperation, separating

²⁶ Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 144.

²⁷ Murray Scot Tanner, *China's Emerging National Police* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 67.

²⁸ René Lévy, *The Police in France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 23.

²⁹ Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 54.

³⁰ Diego Torrente, "Policing in Spain: Between Centralization and Local Autonomy," *European Journal of Criminology* 5, no. 4 (2008): 387.

investigation from law-and-order duties and institutionalizing public participation are essential steps toward building a modern, democratic police force that commands public trust.

Comparative analysis of policing systems reveals that institutional design profoundly shapes police legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness. Centralized models such as those in Saudi Arabia and China demonstrate efficiency in command and uniformity of practice but risk politicization and limited community engagement. Hybrid systems like France and Spain illustrate the challenges of balancing military traditions with civilian oversight often producing jurisdictional overlaps and inefficiencies. Decentralized structures in the United Kingdom and United States highlight the advantages of local responsiveness and public accountability though they may suffer from fragmentation and uneven standards. For India, these lessons underscore the need to reconcile colonial legacies of centralized control with democratic imperatives of transparency, community participation and professional autonomy. The comparative perspective suggests that reform must move beyond structural imitation to cultivate context-specific mechanisms that strengthen trust, insulate policing from political interference and align institutional practices with the expectations of a diverse and dynamic society.

7. Solutions to the problems -

- **Reforming Legal Frameworks** - India's policing system cannot continue to rely on colonial Police Act of 1861. Citizens deserve a law that reflects democratic values rather than imperial control. A new National Police Act should place accountability and transparency at its core, ensuring that officers act as guardians of rights rather than instruments of power. It must separate investigation from law-and-order duties, so that crime detection is not compromised by crowd control or political pressures. Community policing should be given real decision-making authority allowing citizens to shape safety strategies in their own neighbourhoods. Finally, officers must be protected from arbitrary transfers and suspensions with tenure security that allows them to serve with integrity and independence.
- **Independent Oversight** - For oversight to be meaningful, it must be credible, impartial and independent of political influence. State Security Commissions should be empowered to supervise appointments and policy decisions, with at least one-third of their membership drawn from the judiciary and civil society to guarantee fairness and public representation. Police Complaints Authorities must be given binding powers not merely advisory roles, so that their findings carry real weight. Publishing complaints and outcomes online would enhance transparency while positioning these bodies as the sole disciplinary authorities would prevent arbitrary interference. Enforceable oversight mechanisms are essential to rebuild trust and ensure that accountability is not reduced to rhetoric.
- **Modernization and Technology** - In today's environment, investment in technology is not optional but fundamental to effective policing. Modernisation funds must be fully utilised with penalties for under-spending to prevent chronic neglect. Weapons, vehicles, and communication systems require urgent upgrades to match contemporary threats, while every state should establish cyber-crime units and forensic laboratories to strengthen investigative capacity. Expanding satellite-based networks would secure communication channels and enhance coordination across jurisdictions. Modernisation, when pursued systematically can transform the police from a reactive force into a proactive institution capable of meeting the challenges of terrorism, cybercrime, and organized crime in a globalised world.
- **Training and Human Development** Police training must be re-imagined as genuine capacity building rather than a ritualistic exercise. Beyond drill and hierarchy, emphasis should shift to soft skills such as communication, empathy, and conflict resolution, which are essential for building trust with citizens. Modern policing also requires integration of forensic science, cyber-crime investigation and advanced investigative techniques ensuring officers are equipped to handle contemporary challenges. At the same time, physical fitness and discipline must be reinforced to restore respect for the uniform and instill professional pride. Continuous learning through refresher courses, international exchanges and exposure to best practices will keep officers adaptive, innovative and aligned with democratic values.
- **Strengthening Police–Public Relations** Trust remains the cornerstone of effective policing, and rebuilding it requires more than token gestures. Community policing must be institutionalised with genuine citizen participation giving communities a real voice in shaping safety strategies. Transparency should be promoted through public reporting of crime statistics and police performance allowing accountability to be visible and measurable. Officers must be encouraged to see themselves as partners of citizens rather than rulers shifting culture from authority to service. Public awareness campaigns that highlight positive policing stories and

successful collaborations can reshape perceptions, fostering respect and cooperation. A people-friendly police rooted in fairness and responsiveness is the most sustainable path to legitimacy and harmony.

- **Addressing Overburdening** India's police remain chronically understaffed, with sanctioned strength failing to keep pace with population growth and rising crime trends. This shortage forces officers to juggle multiple responsibilities, leading to stress, misconduct, and declining investigative quality. To address this, sanctioned strength must be expanded to meet UN standards of 222 officers per lakh population while reliance on constabulary should be reduced by building stronger investigative cadres. Equally important is the provision of psychological support and counselling services, which can mitigate stress and improve professional conduct. Finally, states must commit to allocating at least 5% of their budgets to policing, reversing recent declines and ensuring that resources match scale of responsibilities.
- **Centre-State Coordination** - Internal security in India cannot be managed in silos; it requires genuine joint responsibility between Centre and States. A National Internal Security Coordination Council should be established to harmonize policy and operational priorities, ensuring representation from both levels of government. To complement state efforts, a national agency dedicated to organised crime would strengthen intelligence and enforcement capacity. Joint operational blueprints for crisis management must be drafted to clarify roles and avoid duplication during emergencies. Moreover, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) should be trained in local customs and languages before deployment, enabling them to operate with sensitivity and effectiveness in diverse regions
- **Judicial Efforts and International Lessons** - Judicial interventions, from the National Police Commission reports to the *Prakash Singh* directives have sought to reform policing by separating functions and insulating the force from politics. Yet, implementation has been diluted with states enacting weak laws and ignoring key directives. Stronger judicial monitoring, enactment of a central Model Police Act, and empowering Complaints Authorities with real independence are essential to translate directives into practice. At the same time, India must learn from international models of accountability and community policing in the UK, USA and France adapting their lessons to its federal and diverse social environment. Reform must move beyond structural imitation to cultivate context-specific mechanisms that strengthen trust, insulate policing from political interference and align institutional practices with democratic expectations.

8. Future Directions and Reform Strategies

The Indian police system must evolve beyond its colonial foundations to meet the demands of a modern democracy. Reform requires shifting from a force of control to a service-oriented institution rooted in accountability, professionalism and community trust. Key priorities include insulating police from political interference, modernizing infrastructure and training and embedding human rights into everyday practice. Community policing, collaboration with local self-governments and transparent oversight mechanisms can strengthen democratic accountability. At the same time, specialization in areas such as cybercrime, terrorism, and transnational threats is essential to address emerging challenges. Ultimately, reform must balance tradition with innovation dismantling authoritarian legacies while building a responsive, citizen-centric police system capable of safeguarding both security and rights in the world's largest democracy.

9. CONCLUSION

Indian police system stands at the intersection of colonial legacy and modern democratic demands. While its foundations were laid to serve imperial control today it must adapt to the needs of a diverse rights-based society. The persistence of rigid hierarchies, political interference and authoritarian practices continues to hinder reform leaving the force often perceived as coercive rather than service-oriented. Future progress depends on transforming the police into a citizen-centric institution. This requires modernization, accountability, and community participation, alongside specialization in emerging areas such as cybercrime and transnational threats. By dismantling colonial structures and embedding democratic values, India can build a police system that protects both security and rights fulfilling its role as a pillar of the world's largest democracy.

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